

September 15, 2015

To: Ct. State Tax Panel

From: Jack Wesa, Chairman Voluntown Economic Development Commission

Re: UNFAIR PILOT REDUCTIONS TO Voluntown AND SOLUTION

Voluntown citizens have been unfairly shorted State PILOT funding for years. This year, in spite of our testifying in response to SB1 here in Hartford, Voluntown was one of the only Towns in the State to have our funds even further cut.

It appears that the legislature has failed to recognize how much property the State owns in Voluntown (over 14,000 acres amounting to over 2/3's of the Town). The State's property in Voluntown is part of the largest State Forest in Connecticut, the Pachaug State Forest consisting of 24,000 acres.

Voluntown is the only Town in the State to have over 50% owned by the State. In fact the State owns nearly 66% of our Town as stated above. The Pachaug State Forest is open year around to all state residents for their recreation. Accordingly Voluntown should be fairly compensated, consider also Voluntown's costs for the rescue and safety services and equipment that our volunteer fire department has been called upon frequently to save those in the State Forest.

Currently the State's PILOT money to Voluntown has been reduced to \$139,145, which is equal to 1.7% of our total Town budget of \$8,269,409.

We would like you to just think about this a moment...

The State owns 2/3's of the town, but the PILOT is only 1.7% of the town's budget.

This is truly a distorted picture, or put another way- Voluntown citizen taxpayers are uniquely being unfairly treated.

In fact this has been the pattern for many years, single digit percent State PILOTs. Compounding this low compensation, our property taxes this year went up 10%! This is unfairly impacting fixed and lower income Voluntown families.

Our suggested solution finds itself rooted in the archaic PA490 valuation of \$190 per acre. Attached please find my spread sheet, 'State of Connecticut Land Sales in the Last 13 years From Voluntown Land Records'. The last six State purchased properties (adding to the Pachaug State Forest) clearly illustrate that the average value per acre paid is \$3,410.

This is the real actual value that should be utilized. It is nearly 18 times greater and accordingly would alter Voluntown's PILOT to be corresponding to the 2/3's ownership of our town. Revised PILOT of \$139,000 x 18=\$2,500,000 which is 30% of our current budget.